

## Reading Group Guide

## Spotlight on: *The Five People You Meet in Heaven*

### Author: Mitch Albom

Born May 23, 1958, in Passaic, NJ; son of Ira (a corporate executive) and Rhoda (an interior designer) Albom; married Janine Sabino (a singer), 1995. Education: Brandeis University, B.A. (sociology), 1979; Columbia University, M.J., 1981, M.B.A., 1982. Memberships: Baseball Writers of America, Football Writers of America, Tennis Writers of America. Addresses: Home: Franklin, MI. Office: Detroit Free Press, 321 West Lafayette, Detroit, MI 48226-2721. E-mail: mitch@albom.com.

**Name:** Mitch Albom

**Born:** May 23, 1958

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321 West Lafayette, Detroit,  
MI 48226-2721

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### Career:

Journalist and author. *Queens Tribune*, Flushing, NY, editor, 1981-82; contributing writer for *Sport*, *Philadelphia Inquirer*, and *Geo*, 1982-83; *Fort Lauderdale News* and *Sun Sentinel*, Fort Lauderdale, FL, sports columnist, 1983-85; *Detroit Free Press*, Detroit, MI, sports columnist, 1985—; WLLZ-radio, Farmington Hills, MI, sports director, beginning 1985, co-host of Sunday Sports Albom, 1988-99; WDIV-TV, Detroit, broadcaster and commentator, beginning 1987; Monday Sports Albom (originally Sunday Sports Albom; syndicated weekly sports talk show), host, 1999—. The Mitch Albom Show (nationally syndicated sports talk show), host, beginning c. 1995; Sports Reporters, ESPN, panelist. Composed song for television movie *Christmas in Connecticut*, 1992. Dream Team (charity), founder, 1989; A Time to Help (volunteer organization), founder, 1998. Member of board of directors, Caring Athletes Team for Children's and Henry Ford Hospitals, Forgotten Harvest, and Michigan Hospice.

### Awards:

Award for best sports news story in the United States, 1985; named number-one Michigan sports columnist, Associated Press (AP) and United Press International (UPI), 1985, 1986, 1987, and 1988; named number-one U.S. sports columnist, AP Sports Editors, 1987, 1988, 1989, 1990, 1991, 1992, 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996, 1997, and 1998; named number-one Michigan sports columnist, National Association of Sportswriters and Broadcasters, 1988 and 1989; National Headliners Award as number-two outstanding writer, 1989; awards for best feature, AP Sports Editors, including 1993; named National Hospice Organization Man of the Year, 1999; numerous other awards.

### Writings:

*The Live Albom: The Best of Detroit Free Press Sports Columnist Mitch Albom*, Detroit Free Press (Detroit, MI), 1988.

(With Bo Schembechler) *Bo: The Bo Schembechler Story*, Warner Books (New York, NY), 1989.

*Live Albom II*, foreword by Ernie Harwell, Detroit Free Press (Detroit, MI), 1990.

*Live Albom III: Gone to the Dogs*, Detroit Free Press (Detroit, MI), 1992.

*Fab Five: Basketball, Trash Talk, the American Dream*, Warner Books (New York, NY), 1993.

*Live Albom IV*, foreword by Dave Barry, Detroit Free Press (Detroit, MI), 1995.

*Tuesdays with Morrie: An Old Man, a Young Man, and Life's Greatest Lesson*, Doubleday (New York, NY), 1997.

*The Five People You Meet in Heaven*, Hyperion (New York, NY), 2003.

*For One More Day*, Hyperion (New York, NY), 2006.



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Contributor to periodicals, including *Gentlemen's Quarterly*, *Sports Illustrated*, *New York Times*, and *Sport*; contributor to MSNBC.com.

### Media Adaptations:

*Tuesdays with Morrie: An Old Man, a Young Man, and Life's Greatest Lesson* was adapted as an Emmy Award-winning television movie, aired by American Broadcasting Companies, Inc. (ABC), 1999, and as a play produced in New York, NY, 2002. Albom adapted his book *The Five People You Meet in Heaven* for a television movie produced by Hallmark Entertainment, aired by ABC, 2004. *Bo: The Bo Schembechler Story* and *Tuesdays with Morrie* were adapted as audio books.

### Sidelights:

Mitch Albom, a journalist for the *Detroit Free Press*, has earned national attention and awards for penning sports columns distinguished by insight, humor, and empathy. Many of his columns have been collected in books that include *The Live Albom: The Best of Mitch Albom*, *Live Albom II*, *Live Albom III: Gone to the Dogs*, and *Live Albom IV*. Disdaining the questionable ethical conduct, drug problems, and overinflated egos often found in the sports world, Albom highlights instances of athletic courage and determination while providing fact-based commentary on a team's performance.

After stints in New York and Florida, Albom arrived in Detroit, Michigan, in 1985 as a staff member of the *Detroit Free Press*. Introducing himself to his new audience in his first column, he explained that readers could expect "some opinion, some heart, some frankness. Some laughs. Some out of the ordinary." Albom also made a good first impression with area sports fans by rejecting the negative stereotype—a crime-ridden and dying city—that Detroit held for the nation. "Some people apparently look at a new job in Detroit as something to be endured or tolerated," he told his audience, going on to say: "I, for one, am thrilled to be here. For sports, they don't make towns any better than this one."

One of Albom's most distinguished traits as a columnist has been his sympathy with disappointed fans when local professional teams struggle unsuccessfully for championships. He commiserated with area readers in 1988 when Detroit's basketball team, the Pistons, battled to the National Basketball Association (NBA) finals and pushed Los Angeles to a full seven-game series, only to lose the last game by three points. He reasoned in one column, included in *The Live Albom*: "They went further than any Pistons team before them. They came onto the stage as brutes and left with an entire nation's respect—for their courage, for their determination, for their talent...They took on all comers...They could beat any team in the league. They just couldn't beat them all." A year earlier, when the underdog Red Wings reached the National Hockey League (NHL) semifinals but lost, Albom reported how, on the long flight home, the players dealt with this defeat. Upon learning that a devoted fan had flown to Edmonton to watch the game, Detroit players chipped in to reimburse him for his ticket. They also joined in on a chorus of that fan's favorite cheer. Witnessing this, Albom wrote, "Amazing. Here were these bruising, scarred, often toothless men, on the night of a season-ending loss, singing a high school cheer. Simply because it made an old guy happy. Many people will remember goals and saves and slap shots from this season. I hope I never forget that cheer."

With columns such as these, Albom earned a loyal following and a reputation as a blue-collar sports fan. His success in print carried over to other media, including radio and television. He joined the staff of rock station WLLZ in 1985, initially serving as sports director. In 1988 he and co-host Mike Stone began a weekly program, *The Sunday Sports Albom*. Guests included both local and national sports figures and the program's format allowed calls by listeners. His stellar guest list was evidence of the comfortable rapport Albom shared with many area athletes and coaches. This accord extended beyond interviews; in 1987 he was even a good luck charm for Detroit's Red Wings. As he explained in a column reprinted in *The Live Albom*, "I am not sure when my car and the fortunes of the Red Wings actually became intertwined. I do know [coach] Jacques Demers and



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I have now driven to five playoff games together and Detroit has won all five, and now even Demers, who is not superstitious, is asking me what time we're leaving."

Albom's relationship with former University of Michigan football coach Bo Schembechler led to a collaboration on Schembechler's autobiography, *Bo: The Bo Schembechler Story*. Respected as a top college coach for his Big-Ten championships and frequent bowl appearances, Schembechler reputedly had a quick temper and churlish personality. In *Bo* Albom presents Schembechler as a sincere family man whose surly demeanor was a deliberate act and who inspired love and respect from his football players. Albom credits Schembechler with turning the Michigan football program around. Albom notes a greater accomplishment, however: Schembechler ran a program free from rules violations and saw his athletes graduate. A *New York Times Book Review* contributor concluded that while *Bo* does not offer much new information about Schembechler, the work strengthened Schembechler's position as a role model for college athletes.

While Albom soon reigned as the darling of the Detroit sports scene, he also became involved with his share of controversy. He raised the ire of a Detroit Tigers pitcher with a column, and eleven months later had a bucket of ice water dumped over his head in the Tigers' clubhouse because the pitcher blamed his disintegrating effectiveness on Albom's commentary. Albom also broke the 1988 story of the after-curfew bar visits of several Red Wings players, reporting that, when confronted with the news, the coach "looked as if he was going to cry." Albom added that this black mark on the team's accomplishments was "not the story I wanted to write. Not the one you wanted to read." In these instances, a prediction Albom made in his first column came true: "I try to be honest...This is not always a pretty job. Sometimes you have to write that the good guys lost, or that somebody's favorite baseball hero in the whole world just checked into the rehab clinic. Still, sports are the only show in town where no matter how many times you go back, you never know the ending. That's special."

Albom expanded his writing beyond the realm of sports with his 1997 publication *Tuesdays with Morrie: An Old Man, a Young Man, and Life's Greatest Lesson*. The book, which was the top-selling nonfiction title of 1998, sprang from Albom's weekly visits with his former professor, Morrie Schwartz. While a student at Brandeis University, Albom was strongly influenced by the unconventional Schwartz, who urged his students to disdain high-paying careers and follow their hearts instead. Upon graduating, Albom promised to keep in touch with his teacher, but he neither called nor visited Schwartz for the next sixteen years. Watching television one night, he saw Schwartz on the ABC television program *Nightline*. The professor had been diagnosed with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), commonly known as Lou Gehrig's disease. A hasty trip to Massachusetts to see his old mentor led to a weekly meeting over the next fourteen weeks until Schwartz's died. Albom was struck by the realization that although he was young, healthy, and wildly successful, his old, dying teacher was a much happier, more peaceful person. He began to write a book based on their conversations, in part to help defray Schwartz's medical expenses.

*Tuesdays with Morrie* is "a slender but emotionally weighty account of Albom's final seminar with Schwartz," in the words of *People* contributor William Plummer. Albom relates the way in which, without even realizing it, he had slowly abandoned his youthful ideals to become cynical, spiritually shallow, and materialistic. Working around the clock to maintain his career left him little time for reflection. Schwartz helped his former student to refocus his life and in chapters that focus on fear, aging, greed, family, forgiveness, and other topics, "the reader hears Morrie advise Mitch to slow down and savor the moment...to give up striving for bigger toys and, above all, to invest himself in love," explained Plummer. "Familiar pronouncements, of course, but what makes them fresh is Morrie's eloquence, his lack of self-pity...and his transcendent humor, even in the face of death."

"One gets whiffs of Jesus, the Buddha, Epicurus, Montaigne and Erik Erikson" from Schwartz's discourses, related Alain de Botton in the *New York Times Book Review*. Yet Botton objected that the "true and sometimes touching pieces of advice" dispensed by Schwartz "don't add up to a very wise book. Though Albom insists that Schwartz's words have transformed him, it's hard to see why...Because Albom fails to achieve any real insight





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into his own...life, it's difficult for the reader to trust in his spiritual transformation."

In contrast, a *Publishers Weekly* reviewer maintained: "Far from being awash in sentiment, the dying man retains a firm grasp on reality," and called *Tuesdays with Morrie* "an emotionally rich book and a deeply affecting memorial to a wise mentor." In a review for the *Columbia Journalism Review*, Dante Chinni commented that *Tuesdays with Morrie* "made Albom something akin to the Kahlil Gibran of disease and spirituality, quoted all over the Internet as a source of inspiration." The book did open doors for the sports journalist, who became a sought-after speaker and was even asked by fellow columnist Dave Barry to join a literary rock band called the Rock Bottom Remainers, which includes Stephen King, Barry, and Amy Tan on its roster.

Albom followed *Tuesdays with Morrie* with his first novel, 2003's *The Five People You Meet in Heaven*. As he told *Publishers Weekly*, the novel is based on stories his Uncle Eddie told him as a child. In the novel, Eddie is a grizzled old man, a war veteran who works as a maintenance man at a fairground. Both he and the people who employ him think little of his worth as a person, and it is not until Eddie dies saving the life of a little girl that the value of his life becomes clear. In heaven, Eddie meets five people who help him gain understanding about life's meaning. A *Publishers Weekly* reviewer commented that, "One by one, these mostly unexpected characters remind him that we all live in a vast web of interconnection with other lives; that all our stories overlap; that acts of sacrifice seemingly small or fruitless do affect others; and that loyalty and love matter to a degree we can never fathom."

Albom continues to write on difficult moral questions—among them euthanasia, medical marijuana, and questions of personal responsibility and law suits—in his newspaper columns and to talk about them on his syndicated radio programs. As Chinni noted in the *Columbia Journalism Review*, "Albom is not a typical sportswriter or a typical anything, for that matter...*Tuesdays with Morrie*...put him in a league of his own." Albom described his role to Chinni: "Communicator...That's all...I'm talking about a lot of things that I'm writing about and I'm writing about a lot of things that I think about. For me it's sort of one job with a lot of tentacles."

### Further Readings:

Albom, Mitch, *The Live Albom*, *Detroit Free Press*, 1988, pp. 12, 208, 218.

Albom, Mitch, *Live Albom II*, *Detroit Free Press*, 1990, pp. 33, 35, 44.

### Periodicals:

*Back Stage*, November 29, 2002, p. 32; January 17, 2003, p. 9.

*Book*, September, 2000, p. 10.

*Books*, December, 1998, p. 22.

*Bookwatch*, February, 1998, p. 11.

*Christian Science Monitor*, April 30, 1998, Robin Whitten, review of audio version of *Tuesday with Morrie*, p. B4.

*Columbia Journalism Review*, September, 2001, p. 18.

*Detroit Free Press*, March 30, 1993, p. C1; August 27, 2003.

*Hollywood Reporter*, November 23, 2002, p. 7.

*Image*, winter, 1998, p. 395.

*Kirkus Reviews*, July 1, 1997, p. 993.

*Kliatt*, May, 1998, p. 56.

*Knight-Ridder/Tribune News Service*, June 9, 1999, p. K3422; October 16, 2001, p. K0231; November 13, 2002, p. K5785; August 27, 2003, p. K7744.

*Lancet*, October 17, 1998, Faith McLellan, "A Teacher to the Last," p. 1318.

*Los Angeles Business Journal*, April 24, 2000, p. 65; December 11, 2000, p. 53; August 5, 2002, p. 39; September 30, 2002, p. 47.

*Modern Healthcare*, February 10, 2003, p. 34.

*Multichannel News*, January 29, 2001, p. 20.

*New York*, December 2, 2002, p. 78.



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*New York Times Book Review*, November 19, 1989, Charles Salzberg, review of *Bo: The Bo Schembechler Story*, p. 44; November 23, 1997, Alain de Botton, review of *Tuesdays with Morrie*, p. 20.  
*People*, January 12, 1998, William Plummer, "Memento Morrie: Morrie Schwartz, While Dying, Teaches Writer Mitch Albom the Secrets of Living," p. 141.  
*Publishers Weekly*, October 5, 1990, review of audio version of *Bo*, p. 73; June 30, 1997, review of *Tuesdays with Morrie*, p. 60; March 2, 1998, review of audio version of *Tuesdays with Morrie*, p. 30; October 9, 2000, Daisy Maryles and Dick Donahue, "Three Years+ with Morrie," p. 22; July 28, 2003, review of *The Five People You Meet in Heaven*, p. 18; August 18, 2003, Tracy Cochran, "Everyone Matters" (interview).  
*Quest*, March-April, 1998, p. 42.  
*Sports Illustrated*, May 15, 1995, "Record Albom," p. 22; December 20, 1999, "Morrie Glory: His Bestseller Now a Hit TV Movie, Sportswriter Mitch Albom Continues His Crossover Act," p. 28; March 5, 2001, p. 16.  
*Tikkun*, March, 2001, p. 75.  
*Tribune Books* (Chicago, IL), December 12, 1993, p. 3.  
*TV Guide*, December 4, 1999, "These Days with Morrie," p. 39.  
*Wall Street Journal*, March 14, 1988, Bradley A. Stertz, "It's Probably Not Too Smart for Us to Publicize This Kind of Revenge," p. 29.  
*Writer's Digest*, September, 2001, p. 38.  
*Writing!*, April-May, 2003, p. 11.

### Online:

Albom Online, [http:// www.albom.com/](http://www.albom.com/) (March 19, 2004).\*

Source:† Contemporary Authors Online, Thomson Gale, 2006.

Source Database:† Contemporary Authors Online



## Reading Group Guide

## Spotlight on: *The Five People You Meet in Heaven*

### Reviews:

#### *Booklist* Reviews September 2003

Albom, newspaper columnist and radio broadcaster, is, of course, best known as the author of the astonishingly successful *Tuesdays with Morrie* (1997). This is his first novel. With an appropriately fable-like tone, Albom tells the story of Eddie, "an old man with a barrel chest." But for us, Eddie's story "begins at the end, with Eddie dying in the sun"—at Ruby Pier, an amusement park by the sea, where he spent most days, for despite his advanced years, he worked as a maintenance man on the rides. He dies on his eighty-third birthday trying to save a little girl from an accident. Eddie wakes up in heaven, where he is informed that "there are five people you meet in heaven. Each...was in your life for a reason. You may not have known the reason at the time, and that is what heaven is for. For understanding your life on earth." And, not surprisingly, this is what the novel is about: Eddie coming to appreciate his 83 years of mortal life; the novel's "point" is that apparently insignificant lives do indeed have their own special kind of significance. A sweet book that makes you smile but is not goeey with overwrought sentiment. (Reviewed September 1, 2003) Copyright 2003 *Booklist* Reviews

#### *Library Journal* Reviews September 2003

Website: <http://www.cahners.com>

Sports columnist, radio talk-show host, and author of *Tuesdays with Morrie*, Albom has written a parable quite different from his best-selling memoir about his old professor but with the potential to follow it as a favorite of the book club circuit. At an oceanside amusement park, 83-year-old maintenance mechanic Eddie is killed while trying to save a little girl. Instead of floating through the cliched tunnel-and-light territory, Eddie meets five people whose lives intersected with his during his time on Earth. The novel comes down firmly on the side of those who feel that life matters, that what we do as individuals matters, and that in the end there will be a quiz. The touchy-feely phobic need not be afraid: this is not judgmental ax-grinding; nor does it favor any religion. Before you finish reading, you can't help thinking about your own life-Albom's whole point, of course. *Morrie* fans will want to read this first novel, and readers daring to examine their own lives may enjoy as well. For all public libraries.-Mary K. Bird-Guilliams, Wichita P.L., KS Copyright 2003 Reed Business Information.

#### *BookPage* Reviews September 2003

Website: <http://www.bookpage.com>

#### Strangers in paradise

How does an author follow up one of the most phenomenal bestsellers in recent publishing history? That was the dilemma facing Mitch Albom after his last book, *Tuesdays with Morrie*, perched itself atop the *New York Times* bestseller list and refused to leave the party until six million copies were sold.

Albom, who apparently possesses 30 hours per day in which to write a column for the *Detroit Free Press* and host a radio show when he's not writing, has chosen to follow up his blockbuster with a sweetly rendered parable that in tone and message echoes its big brother.

In *The Five People You Meet in Heaven*, octogenarian Eddie dies during a freak carnival ride accident. Just as Ebenezer Scrooge took a fateful Christmas Eve glimpse into his past, present and future, Eddie gets a similar guided tour through his own life. But while the icy Scrooge is offered a chance at redemption, it's clear from the get-go that Eddie is, in fact, dead. His job now is to meet the five spirits waiting to help him make peace with his time on Earth.



## Reading Group Guide (2)

## Spotlight on: *The Five People You Meet in Heaven*

### Reviews: (continued)

In Albom's vision of heaven, the newly dead connect with spirits who help them make the transition to the afterlife. Most people would expect to meet long-lost friends or relatives, but in Albom's view, it is strangers who can best enlighten us.

Through his encounters, Eddie comes to accept the atrocities he witnessed as a soldier, which cast a shadow over the rest of his life. In the book's most affecting moment, Eddie also sees that his decades as a lowly maintenance worker served a nobler purpose than he ever imagined.

There's a fine line between poignant and maudlin, and Albom teeters on that ledge at points. But his power as a writer allows him to pull back, keeping his worthy message intact. Albom is unafraid of tackling the big questions, and in this effort he plunges into perhaps the biggest of them all: Why are we here? Trust Albom to offer a plausible answer. Amy Scribner is a writer in Washington, D.C. Copyright 2003 *BookPage* Reviews

*Publishers Weekly* Reviews August 2003

Website: <http://www.cahners.com>

"At the time of his death, Eddie was an old man with a barrel chest and a torso as squat as a soup can," writes Albom, author of the bestselling phenomenon *Tuesdays with Morrie*, in a brief first novel that is going to make a huge impact on many hearts and minds. Wearing a work shirt with a patch on the chest that reads "Eddie" over "Maintenance," limping around with a cane thanks to an old war injury, Eddie was the kind of guy everybody, including Eddie himself, tended to write off as one of life's minor characters, a gruff bit of background color. He spent most of his life maintaining the rides at Ruby Pier, a seaside amusement park, greasing tracks and tightening bolts and listening for strange sounds, "keeping them safe." The children who visited the pier were drawn to Eddie "like cold hands to a fire." Yet Eddie believed that he lived a "nothing" life-gone nowhere he "wasn't shipped to with a rifle," doing work that "required no more brains than washing a dish." On his 83rd birthday, however, Eddie dies trying to save a little girl. He wakes up in heaven, where a succession of five people are waiting to show him the true meaning and value of his life. One by one, these mostly unexpected characters remind him that we all live in a vast web of interconnection with other lives; that all our stories overlap; that acts of sacrifice seemingly small or fruitless do affect others; and that loyalty and love matter to a degree we can never fathom. Simply told, sentimental and profoundly true, this is a contemporary American fable that will be cherished by a vast readership. Bringing into the spotlight the anonymous Eddies of the world, the men and women who get lost in our cultural obsession with fame and fortune, this slim tale, like Charles Dickens's *A Christmas Carol*, reminds us of what really matters here on earth, of what our lives are given to us for. Backed by a \$500,000 marketing campaign that includes a 30-city author tour, and boosted by the good will that millions will feel when they see Albom's name on the cover, this wonderful title should grace national fiction bestseller lists for a long time. Simultaneous Hyperion Audiobook, BOMC main selection. (One-day laydown Sept. 23) Copyright 2003 Reed Business Information.





## Reading Group Guide (3)

## Spotlight on: *The Five People You Meet in Heaven*

### Discussion Questions:

Reading Group Guide from [www.albomfivepeople.com](http://www.albomfivepeople.com)

1. At the start of *The Five People You Meet in Heaven*, Albom says that "all endings are also beginnings." In general, what does this mean? How does it relate to this story in particular? Share something in your life that has begun as another thing ended, and the events that followed.
2. What initially grabs your attention in *The Five People You Meet in Heaven*? What holds it?
3. How does counting down the final minutes of Eddie's life affect you as a reader? Why does Albom do this? Other storytelling devices Albom uses include moving from past to present by weaving Eddie's birthdays throughout the story. How do these techniques help inform the story? What information do you learn by moving around in time? How effective is Albom's style for this story in particular?
4. What does Eddie look like and what kind of guy is he? Look at and discuss some of the details and descriptions that paint a picture of Eddie and his place of business. What is it about an amusement park that makes it a good backdrop for this story?
5. Consider the idea that "no story sits by itself. Sometimes stories meet at corners and sometimes they cover one another completely, like stones beneath a river." How does this statement relate to *The Five People You Meet in Heaven*?
6. How does Albom build tension around the amusement park ride accident? What is the significance of Eddie finding himself in the amusement park again after he dies? What is your reaction when Eddie realizes he's spent his entire life trying to get away from Ruby Pier and he is back there immediately after death? Do you think this is important? Why?
7. Describe what Albom's heaven is like. If it differs from what you imagined, share those differences. Who are the five people Eddie meets? Why them? What are their relationships to Eddie? What are the characteristics and qualities that make them the five people for Eddie?
8. Share your reactions and thoughts about the Blue Man's story, his relationship with his father, and his taking silver nitrate. What, if anything, does this have to do with Eddie? Why does he say to Eddie, "This is not your heaven, it's mine"?
9. How does the Blue Man die? What affect does it have on you when you look at the same story from two different points of view—his and Eddie's? Can you share any events that you have been involved in that can be viewed entirely differently, from another's point of view? How aware are we of other's experiences of events that happen simultaneously to us and to them? Why?
10. Discuss what it means that "That there are no random acts. That we are all connected. That you can no more separate one life from another than you can separate a breeze from the wind." Even though Eddie hasn't been reincarnated, consider karma in Eddie's life (where Eddie's actions would affect his reincarnation). If it isn't karma, what is Albom telling us about life, and death?





## Reading Group Guide (4)

## Spotlight on: *The Five People You Meet in Heaven*

11. Think about Eddie's war experiences and discuss your reactions to Albom's evocation of war. What did Eddie learn by being in war? How did he "come home a different man"? Why did the captain shoot Eddie? Explore what it means when the captain tells Eddie, "I took your leg to save your life." Why does the captain tell Eddie that sacrifice is not really a loss, but a gain? Examine whether or not Eddie understands this, and the significance of this lesson.
12. Discuss what you might say to Eddie when he asks "why would heaven make you relive your own decay?"
13. Examine whether or not you agree with the old woman when she tells Eddie, "You have peace when you make it with yourself," and why. Consider what she means when she says, "things that happen before you are born still affect you. And people who come before your time affect you as well." How does this relate to Eddie's life? Who are some who have come before you that have affected your own life?
14. What is Eddie's father's response each time Eddie decides to make an independent move, away from working at the pier? Examine how Eddie's father's choices and decisions actually shape Eddie's life. Why does Eddie cover for his father at the pier when his father becomes ill? What happens then? Share your own experience of a decision your own parents made that affected your life, for better or for worse.
15. Who tells Eddie that "we think that hating is a weapon that attacks the person who harmed us. But hatred is a curved blade. And the harm we do we do to ourselves"? What is the significance of this particular person in Eddie's life? Why is this important for Eddie to understand? Is it important for all of us to understand? Why? Discuss whether or not you agree that, "all parents damage their children. It cannot be helped." How was Eddie damaged?
16. Why does Marguerite want to be in a place where there are only weddings? How does this relate to her own life, and to her relationship and life with Eddie?
17. Discuss why Eddie is angry at his wife for dying so young. Examine what Marguerite means when she says, "Lost love is still love. It takes a different form. You can't see their smile or bring them food or tousle their hair or move them around on the dance floor. But when these senses waken, another heightens....Life has an end. Love doesn't." Why does she say this to Eddie? Do you think he gets it? Discuss whether or not you agree with her, and why.
18. Why does Eddie come upon the children in the river? What does Tala mean when she says "you make good for me"? Discuss whether or not Eddie's life is a penance, and why. What is the significance of Tala pulling Eddie to safety after he dies? Why is it Tala that pulls him to heaven and not one of the other four?
19. What would you say to Eddie when he laments that he accomplished nothing with his life? Discuss what has he accomplished.
20. Briefly recall the five lessons Eddie learns. How might these be important for all of us? Share which five people might meet you in heaven, and what additional or different lessons might be important to your life. Discuss how Albom's *The Five People You Meet in Heaven* has provided you with a different perspective of your life.